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ABSTRACT

Feminist research techniques in sociology, history, and anthropology reveal consistent approaches on how to study women. In all three disciplines, feminist methodology reveals a pervasive lack of information about women's worlds, a bias in the underrepresentation of women researchers, a need to reconceptualize previously investigated phenomena to include women's experiences, and biases in the kind of research questions asked. To resolve these omissions and biases, feminist scholars take techniques in one discipline and apply them to the subject matter of another in order to avoid sexist assumptions of their own field's methods. Examples are the use of linguistic methodologies in sociology, archaeological and ethnohistorical techniques in anthropology, and demographic analysis in history research. Also, feminist methodology duplicates earlier research to evaluate its analysis and explanation (or lack of analysis and explanation) for gender inequality. Finally, feminist research in all three disciplines involves the development and refinement of new methods of data collection. Nontraditional sources, such as women's medical and church records, minutes of women's clubs and voluntary societies, and refined essay questionnaires, are used. In these ways, feminist methodology unveils the distortions of a sexist society while working toward a transformation of the future. (Author/KC)

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THE DEVELOPMENT OF FEMINIST METHODOLOGY: IDEAS AND PRACTICE IN THREE ACADEMIC DISCIPLINES *

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THE DEVELOPMENT OF FEMINIST METHODOLOGY: IDEAS AND PRACTICE IN THREE ACADEMIC DISCIPLINES

Judith A. Cook

Abstract

Even in their diversity, feminist methodological techniques in the disciplines of sociology, history and anthropology reveal consistent approaches to the issue of how to study women. First, feminist methodology in all three fields displays four major epistemological ideas: 1) there is a pervasive lack of information about women's worlds; 2) there is a bias in the underrepresentation of women researchers; 3) there is a need to reconceptualize previously-investigated phenomena to include women's experiences; and 4) the kinds of research questions that are asked have crucial implications both for the results obtained and for practical action. Given consistency between these ideas of methodology, the diversity of specific techniques reflects various theoretical, methodological and practical shortcomings of each discipline as they are related to the study of women. Even these varied techniques, however, display consistent features such as methodological borrowing, de-bunking through attempts to replicate, and the development of new approaches. Thus, the diversity of feminist methodology does not spring from conceptual vagueness nor lack of rigor, but reflects both over-arching ideas and attempts to address the specific biases of each field's research and theory concerning women.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF FEMINIST METHODOLOGY: IDEAS AND PRACTICE IN THREE ACADEMIC DISCIPLINES

To feminist and non-feminist scholars alike, the concept of feminist methodology has long been a puzzling, somewhat troublesome notion. Non-feminists tend to view such an approach as "unscientific," "ideological," or "biased,"[1] while feminists, on the other hand, find themselves uneasy about the vagueness and ambiguity associated with the term. In fact, the notion of feminist methodology has long suffered from comparisons with traditional scientific methodologies by appearing to be too amorphous and undefinable. However, it is the contention of this analysis that such comparisons are useless in that the concept itself does not represent another type of methodology but rather an alternative to methodology as currently practiced in our largely sexist research institutions. Further, such comparisons obscure the interplay between the epistemological ideas and the technical practice of feminist methodology, by highlighting the differences in methodological techniques across (and even within) disciplines, and ignoring over-arching similarities in the methodological assumptions of feminist researchers.

As employed in this analysis, the term "methodology" refers to the study of methods and not simply to the particular methods themselves.[2] Thus, feminist methodology involves the description, explanation, and justification of methodological techniques used in feminist research. As such, the notion of feminist methodology can be more accurately understood as an abstract classification referring to a variety of methodological stances, conceptual approaches, and research strategies.

However, instead of viewing this as a shortcoming, a true understanding of the concept reveals the strength inherent in a variety of approaches and definitions. This is because the nature of feminist methodology is that of feminist critique,

enabling the researcher to evaluate and hopefully transcend sexist notions present, not only in patriarchal research, but in the wider patriarchal society. As such, some features of feminist methodology are specific to the discipline in which it is practiced while other more general features are found across academic fields. The remainder of this paper will explore these ideas by examining the nature of feminist methodology as discussed in the literature of three academic disciplines, namely: sociology, anthropology, and history.

The Ideas of Feminist Methodology

Regardless of the discipline, at least four characteristics are found in all types of feminist methodology. The first involves recognition of the large gaps in our knowledge created by researchers who ignore women and women's concerns as research topics. In the field of history this issue has been addressed by resurrecting and reassessing source materials and making these available through libraries, anthologies and reprints.[3] Anthropologists have concentrated on gathering information on areas of a culture that are primarily female, such as women's rituals,[4] methods of child-rearing and child-spacing,[5] and food ways.[6] Sociologists have turned their attention to social contexts where women predominate such as the beauty parlor, pediatrician's office and shopping center.[7] Thus, a crucial feature of feminist methodology is its focus of research on women's worlds in order to understand women s experiences in a given culture, historical time period, or social position.

A second feature of feminist methodology is its emphasis on the importance of the feminist researcher. This entails recognition of a methodological bias in the fact that women are now, and have always been, severely underrepresented in all three disciplines.[8] This bias is created because male researchers studying women's

worlds are frequently unable to understand women empathetically. Opinions range from those scholars who believe that only women can study other women, to those who propose that the most important criterion is the researcher' commitment to feminism, regardless of sex.

A third feature of feminist methodology, present in all three disciplines, is the constant awareness of the need to reformulate existent concepts, so that they may be meaningfully applied to women. This often involves demonstrating how particular conceptual formulations exclude women by definition, or have little relevance to women's lives. It is interesting to note that in all three fields the concept of power has received considerable attention, including extensive critique and reformulation. By redefining power in less-coercive terms as the "ability to do or effect something," historian Leila Rupp has shown how the exercise of power can be discovered in a variety of "hidden" contexts.[9] Women may use techniques such as rioting or seduction, that are "illegitimate" according to patriarchal standards; or they may turn cultural restrictions, such as those surrounding motherhood, to their own advantage. Sociologists Safilios-Rothschild[10] and Johnson[11] have both explored women's use of more indirect, personal, and private forms of power. In fact, Johnson has demonstrated empirically that individuals can identify "male" and "female" forms of power, and also that male use of female forms may be considered appropriate by members of both sexes, but female use of male forms is not. Finally, anthropologists have examined the phenomenon of power as exercised by women in a variety of cultures. This has entailed linking power to women's contribution to subsistence,[12] to their participation in extra-domestic exchange of valued goods and services,[13] to their role in social or public labor,[14] and to their ability to constrain the options open to male kin.[15] Other important reconceptualizations include historians' reevaluation of periodicization schemas,[16] sociologists' reformulation of the concepts of masculinity and femininity,[17] and anthropologists'

concern with notions of public and private domain.[18] Finally, this feature of feminist methodology has also entailed discarding or overhauling many traditional ways of operationalizing concepts that use men or male populations as a "norm."

The fourth and final feature of feminist methodology is an explicit awareness of the kinds of research questions that are asked, and how these influence the nature of research results in two important ways. First, feminist methodology implies an understanding of how research questions are molded by cultural gender assumptions. Feminist sociologists, for example, have pointed out that defining the sociological research problem often entails pejorative labeling of those who violate traditional gender prescriptions.[19] Thus, previous research has emphasized the problems of female-headed households and single-parent families, without exploring problems associated with two parent families.[20] Feminist historians have questioned the use of oppression models of women's history, which examine the ways women have been denied rights, power and influence.[21] Although agreeing that such information is valuable, many feel that sole emphasis on this framework promotes a view of women as passive victims and powerless historical actors.[22] Finally, anthropologists have criticized the use of ethnographic evidence to discover the "origins" of sexual inequality. Defining the research in this way, it is argued, encourages universalist conclusions that ignore local and specific political and social relations.[23]

The second way in which feminist methodology acknowledges the importance of the research question is through awareness of the political implications of a particular topic for women. This concern is related to the nature of feminist methodology as exhibiting an activist stance. Regardless of the level of activism of the particular researcher, it is recognized that the research act itself is inherently political.[24] Thus, attention is generally paid to framing research questions in such a way that they can be related to current policy and practical concerns regarding feminist issues.

Identification of these four features, then, demonstrates the consistency between ideas of feminist methodology as expressed in the fields of history, anthropology, and sociology. But as we examine the practice of feminist methodology in these disciplines we encounter a variety of techniques, a number of approaches, and many different orientations. This diversity stems from the nature of feminist methodology as generated through feminist critique of theory and research in a largely patriarchal academia. That is, differences in the practice of feminist methodology reflect various theoretical, methodological and practical shortcomings of each discipline as they are related to the study of women. Thus, the diversity of feminist methodological strategies reflects the diverse ways in which feminist scholars have sought to address the inadequacies of so-called "scientific," "objective" methods when applied to women. This sometimes means that feminist methodology in one discipline endorses techniques that its counterpart in another field might reject. So, for example, in the field of history feminist methodology involves quantitative analyses of census materials, criminal records, and dowry bequests because so little attention has been directed toward this approach to studying women's past.[25] On the other hand, in the field of sociology feminist methodology attempts to move away from rigid quantification toward a more qualitative strategy that is better suited for examining women's worlds.[26] Rather than viewing this diversity negatively, the following section will illustrate how the different methodological techniques of feminist scholars are related to and emerge from their discipline's particular biases and inaccuracies in the study of women.

The Practice of Feminist Methodology: Examples from Three Disciplines

Sociology

In the discipline of sociology, for many years a methodological conflict has existed between two types of approaches to research: the quantitative and the

qualitative. Essentially, the quantitative approach is a counting operation involving the use of statistical probability models applied to randomly-selected samples assumed to be representative of larger populations. Controlled experiments, large scale questionnaire surveys, and secondary analyses of already collected data such as census data are all examples of quantitative methodology. On the other hand, the qualitative approach involves closer contact between researcher and subject so that the respondent is able to influence the kinds of issues explored and the framework in which they are examined. Participant observation, face-to-face interviewing, and systematic field observations are all examples of the qualitative approach.

At this point in time, quantitative methodology is clearly the more accepted form in the field of sociology. A recent analysis of articles published in the discipline's two most prestigious journals - American Journal of Sociology and American Sociological Review - found that less than 10% of articles appearing over the past five years used qualitative techniques or discussed qualitative issues.[27] This emphasis on quantitative strategies reflects the fact that most sociological research focuses on the public, formal and official features of social organization, ignoring the more private, informal and interpersonal social contexts in which women most frequently operate.[28] Thus, feminist sociologists have been forced to address the issue of how quantification hinders the study of gender by limiting the analysis to that which can be counted.

Feminist methodology within the discipline has reflected these concerns in at least two ways. The first has been a feminist critique of the use and nature of quantitative methods. This has centered on the idea that such an approach displays a "machismo" attitude in its emphasis on controlling and manipulating reality from a distance.[29] Thus, the use of techniques such as mail questionnaires often reflects sociologists' unwillingness or inability to personally relate to their subjects.[30] As a result, quantitative research can be said to deal with variables

rather than people, and with the researcher's frame of reference rather than the respondent's. Allof this, of course, is problematic given the fact that while most sociologists are male, the social realities of men and women are often very different.[31] Thus, the approach is inadequate since it focuses on contexts where women are less likely to operate, and does so in terms with which women are less likely to identify.

Another focus of the feminist critique is an exploration of how assumptions underlying quantitative techniques are inapplicable to the study of gender. One example of this line of critique is David Tresmer's analysis of bias in statistical studies of sex differences.[32] Tresmer shows how such research exaggerates sex differences by assuming that masculinity and femininity are bipolar, uni-dimensional, continuous, and normally distributed characteristics in the popluation. Underscoring this bias is a tendency to interpret studies finding sex differences as more significant (i.e., publishable) than those finding sex similarities. This emphasis on gender divergence and concomitant use of an over-simplified dichotomous model of masculinity/femininity reflects a double standard in the behavioral expectations of researchers that may or may not be true of actual behavior.[33]

The second way feminist methodology reflects these concerns is through its endorsement of qualitative research strategies. By allowing respondents to speak for themselves and/or locating the researcher in the respondent's social milieu, closer involvement with the research subject is encouraged. This is especially crucial for understanding more private, hidden, interpersonal social contexts and their female actors. But in addition, qualitative techniques also provide a wealth of first-hand, in-depth, descriptive and analytical information needed to correct the discipline's neglect of women's lives. For example, the topics of women blue collar, pink collar and service workers, all previously ignored, have

recently been described and analyzed through qualitative research on women steel workers,[34] secretaries,[35] waitresses,[36] telephone service workers,[37] and other pink collar workers such as cosmetologists and sales workers.[38]

A related feminist approach is that of triangulation, or the use of more than one research technique simultaneously.[39] Usually, this involves employing at least one qualitative and one quantitative method so that findings from each may inform and complement the other. One recent example of this approach is a study of the teaching styles and attitudes of male and female university professors which used timed-observation, questionnaires and open-ended interviews.[40] Another example is Kanter's research on men and women in a large multi-national corporation which used participant-observation, interviewing, questionnaires, and content analysis.[41] While this approach is often the most productive way to study gender relations, one drawback is that it is also extremely expensive.

Many feminist sociologists have turned their attention to developing and refining new qualitative approaches such as oral histories, textual analysis, and more "politicized" ethnomethodological strategies.[42] One example has been the recent expansion of the use of linguistic methodologies to explore the operation of gender in language. By applying these techniques to vocabulary, phonology, and grammatical forms, sociologists have uncovered hidden features of sexual assymetry and revealed male biases incorporated in our linguistic systems.[43] Other researchers have applied the methods of conversational analysis to interactions between men and women.[44] For example, one such study found an unequal division of labor in conversations such that women were more active in ensuring interaction by asking questions and making supportive utterances than men.[45]

Another recent qualitative development is the essay questionnaire, proposed by researcher Shere Hite.[46] In her article, "Toward a New Methodology in the Social

Sciences: Is the Hite Report 'Scientific'?" she critiques the use of statistical measurement in sociology for its tendency to establish and reinforce "norms" and create a-historical models of behavior.[47] Instead, she proposes methodology conceived of as a process, both for the research subject, the researcher, and the larger audience. By allowing respondents to answer essay questions and then presenting these unedited essays to the reader in a historical and cultural framework, Hite aims for a more cooperative, equal and holistic account of women's experiences. By presenting as much original "data" as possible, the technique also allows readers to draw their own conclusions, in agreement or disagreement with the researcher.

One final area of feminist methodological practice concerns the sexual politics of doing field research. Techniques for dealing with sexual "come-on's" during the research process, "playing-dumb" to gain access to sensitive information, and ways to secure entree to male-dominated settings are examples of the field strategies feminist sociologists have discussed.[48] The value of team research for women with limited financial resources or those with severe time constraints, such as mothers, have also been explored.[49] In fact, the collaborative model of doing research can result, not only in higher quality studies, but also in linking more women sociologists with each other, promoting the exchange of information about new techniques and strategies. This can also stimulate dissemination of alternative methodological stances borrowed from other "marginal" groups of researchers. An example of this is Fonow's recent paper exploring the implications of conflict methodology for feminist methodology.[50]

In all these ways, then, feminist methodology in the field of sociology has refocused concern on the more private, hidden, and interpersonal arenas of social life. After questioning gender assumptions underlying the quantitative model,

feminist sociologists have pursued approaches of a less controlling, manipulative, and distant nature. This has involved applying traditional qualitative techniques to previously-ignored gender topics, as well as the creation of new qualitative approaches. Both directions have been particularly successful in eliciting much needed descriptive and analytical information concerning areas of women's worlds neglected by male sociologists.

History

Until the early 1970's, the field of women's history was characterized by two competing approaches. On the one hand, use of "oppression" models, discussed earlier, portrayed women as passive victims, incapable of taking part in the creation of culture. On the other hand, use of the "contribution" model emphasized cataloging the accomplishments of exceptional (usually upper class) women.[51] This latter orientation was criticized for ignoring class differences between women, and for failure to include women from the lower strata of societies who lacked the resources required to make "contributions".[52] Other feminist historians also pointed out that this approach uses an implicit male standard for deciding which contributions are "significant" (i.e., those in the political and scientific spheres), taking men as the measure of excellence.[53]

One characteristic of both approaches was their neglect of women's diverse location in systems of social and economic stratification. Oppression models lacked criteria for assessing women's status since they automatically assumed that women's position was lower than that of men and, as mentioned earlier, contribution models tended to ignore class membership altogether. Thus, feminist historians turned their attention to devising new frameworks that would take account of class location and gender simultaneously, picturing women as historical actors constrained by their differential access to material and social resources.

One such development in feminist methodology has been the appearence of relational analysis, first proposed by historian Joan Kelly-Gadol. Such an approach goes beyond examining women's access to power by focusing on the relative position of men and women in the same class. By standardizing historical time period as well as social class this approach reveals variations in the position of women and their access to different opportunities and priveleges. Even so, the underlying model assumes that "women as a group cut through male class systems," and thus relational analysis relates women's and men's history by assuming that societal developments may have radically different consequences for the two sexes.[54] One of the major insights to emerge from use of this framework is that periods of so-called progressive societal advancement were actually those in which women's status declined. So, for example: "There was no 'renaissance' for women — at least not during the renaissance. There was, on the contrary, a marked restriction of the scope and powers of women."[55] Other periods of "progress" such as the Reformation and French Revolution have been shown to have been less than favorable to women's rights.[56] In fact, women appear to gain most during times of societal strife and turmoil when normal power relations are interrupted, such as wars and revolts.[57] Thus, the use of relational analysis has led to the uncovering of an inverse relationship between the position of men and that of women at key transition points in a culture's history.

Another methodological development in women's history stems from recognition that much of our historical information comes from what men have said about women.[58] Attempts to avoid exclusive reliance on the accounts of men have led feminist historians to rely more heavily on women's own descriptions preserved in letters, diaries, and memoirs. Examples of this type of analysis in American History are Christiane Fischer's work on frontier women,[59] and Barbara Wertheimer's history

of working women.[60] In her now-classic article, "New Approaches to the Study of Women in American History," Gerda Lerner cautioned feminist scholars to be alert for distinctions between women's "proper place" and their "actual status" at any given time.[61] In response, feminist historians have also turned to oral history as a methodological technique which avoids male sources and allows the researcher to examine both norms and actual behavior. The value of this approach, which involves analysis of person-to-person tape-recorded interviews, to the study of women has recently been the subject of numerous scholarly articles.[62] All three types of oral history interview -- the topical, biographical and autobiographical -- allow the researcher and subject to interact in a face-to-face situation that validates the worth of the woman being interviewed and is, therefore, a feminist encounter.[63] The variability of the oral history interview format means that it can be tailored to fit specific topics, the styles of particular interviewers, and the experiences of individual respondents. Moreover, this methodological technique can be used both to test previous findings and to reveal new information serendipitously.[64] For example, oral history interviews for a study of black women in the American Frontier west recently revealed the existence of "Dearfield," an all-black farming community founded in Colorado in 1910.[65] While little archival evidence is available for the town, oral history interviews have provided valuable data on black westward migration, as well as a better understanding of the role of black women in creating and maintaining the social networks of their frontier communities. Some other examples of areas in which the technique has been applied include the immigration experiences of Chinese women,[66] and the place of women in the anti-war movement of the 1960's.[67]

As mentioned earlier, there isstill much quantitative work that needs to be done in the field of women's history. Information regarding women's life expectancies, ages at marriage, rates of fertility, intervals between births, and

patterns of geographical mobility have yet to be analyzed for most historical time periods.[68] Aside from traditional demographic sources, women's historians have also turned to the records of churches and educational institutions, minutes and files of women's societies and community organizations, police and criminal records, hospital and medical records for quantitative material pertaining to women.[69] However, the limitations of this approach have also been explored by feminist historians who point out that it establishes trends and correlations, but, used alone, can not explain them. An example of this is Gerda Lerner's discussion of falling birth rates in Europe during the eighteenth century and in the United States during the nineteenth century.[70] She notes that male demographic historians have interpreted these declines as representing an increased "domestic power of women" through their ability to convince their husbands to limit the frequency of sexual intercourse as a form of birth control. As Lerner points out, there is nothing in the figures to indicate a conscious, deliberate choice on the part of women; men, in fact, may have realized that in the newly industrialized society reduced fertility could enable upward mobility.[71] Thus, those who use demographic techniques as a feminist methodological strategy generally are careful to recognize the limitations of these methods in explaining women's experiences.

To some extent, then, feminist methodology in the field of women's history is a response to the field's two major models -- oppression and contribution -- and their lack of attention to women's class and economic positions at a given time and place. In addition, the problem of the relation between cultural norms and actual behavior has inspired several strategies such as the use of women's personal accounts and use of the oral history interview. As mentioned earlier, neglect of the area by most historians has meant that much quantitative work in the field has yet to be done. Thus, feminist methodology in the field of history uses a broad range of orientations to address major methodological and analytical shortcomings.

Anthropology

Anthropological research on women has been hindered by a number of factors. First, cultural prohibitions have limited male anthropologists' access to women, so that often only data on the male sectors of a culture is obtained and reported.[72] Second, even when women informants are available, their activities have been ignored or trivialized by many ethnographers.[73] Third, with women less accessible, anthropologists have often relied on the reports of men about women's roles, attitudes and behavior. Unfortunately, this method is seldom reliable since it actually elicits men's perceptions of women's worlds and these perceptions are usually influenced by notions of male superiority.[74] Thus, anthropology is subject to a double male bias: first, the bias brought by the researcher to the analysis; and second, the bias of the culture being studied.[75] This has led many feminist anthropologists to re-examine the claims made by earlier ethnographers and their male informants about the roles, values and behavior of women. This "revisionist" anthropology has often uncovered evidence that modifies or contradicts some basic anthropological assumptions. For example, in her discussion of the Highlands groups of Papua, New Guinea, Elizabeth Faithhorn notes that male anthropologists have traditionally used the concept of pollution to refer to the capacity of women to endanger men through their bodily secretions and general femaleness.[76] Her own fieldwork, however, has found that pollution actually refers to the potential of either sex to jeopardize the other, and that both men and women may endanger affinal kin of each sex.[77] Another frequent challenge to the double male bias involves refuting male anthropologists' contention that men completely dominate marriage arrangements, and that these are made solely in the interests of male kin. Leavitt et. al. point out that such an interpretation ignores the benefits and powers that accrue to women, particularly the mother-in-law, in marriage arrangements among Australian Aborigines.[78] Jones and Jones's fieldwork in Limbuan, Nepal found that the high number of

elopements, divorces, and desertions initiated by women in that society demonstrated how the women made marriage arrangements to suit their own purposes.[79] More than ever before, then, feminist methodology in anthropology involves efforts to replicate with explicit attention to avoiding dual male biases in the collection and analysis of ethnographic data. This approach, in turn, has been used to challenge many earlier, often classic pieces of fieldwork and theorizing such as Malinowski's work on the Trobriand Islanders,[80] and Washburn and Lancaster's "Man the Hunter" theory.[81]

Another feature of feminist methodology in anthropology is its emphasis on comparative analysis as a way to examine the variations in women's position and role behavior across different cultures. This focus on the comparative method has also stimulated the growth of inter-disciplinary, regional and area studies on women that are necessary for comparative research, such as recent work on women in China,[82] in Latin America,[83] and in Russia.[84] Feminist anthropologists have concentrated on developing appropriate cross-cultural frameworks, especially indices of female status, to apply in comparative analyses. This comparative approach has uncovered wide variations in female status, even between societies considered culturally similar. However, it appears that in all societies, men have greater access to public prestige and power than women.[85]

Moreover, the comparative method has revealed that women's status is a complex multi-dimensional phenomenon, and that indices of women's status may be inconsistent within cultures and inapplicable across societal boundries. As anthropologist M.Z. Rosaldo has noted:[86]

> "The failure of attempts to rank societies in terms of 'women's place' or to explain apparent variations in the amounts of privelege women elsewhere may enjoy (in terms consistent with cross-cultural data) suggests that we have been pursuing something of a ghost - or, rather, that an investigator who asks if women's status here or there ought to be reckoned high or low is probably conceptually misguided."

Thus, attention has turned toward understanding women's status, not as a unitary, internally consistent phenomenon, but as a cultural pattern in reciprocal relation with specific social, historical and political conditions.

These developments, in turn, have led anthropologists to look more closely at the variation of women's status within cultures. One result of this trend has been the use of a life-cycle approach to explore how women gain power or influence at different points in their lives.[87] For example, Joyce uses the life history of an Appalachian farm woman to illustrate how her perceptions of her own power and autonomy are related to different stages of her life, as well as the changing social and political context of the "outside world."[88] This approach has also been applied to human groups as well as individuals. Thus, by focusing on the developmental cycle of women's networks on the island of St. Kitts in the West Indies, anthropologist Judith Gussler demonstrates how lower-class women use the material and social resources of a support group composed of both kin and non-kin members to obtain food, clothing and other goods and services.[89] By contrasting the rudimentary networks of teenage mothers and the fully developed networks of older women, Gussler shows how the developmental stage of a woman's network influences her social and economic mobility. Both the life history and developmental approaches, then, have been used as methodological tools to expand anthropologists' conceptions of women's status, and to demonstrate the cultural interplay between women's positions and their social, economic and political contexts.

Another aspect of the practice of feminist methodology in anthropology is the use of archaeological evidence to examine gender relations in early civilizations. In some instances a feminist reading of archaeological data is used to revise male-biased interpretations of the same evidence.[90] This is the case with Sally Slocum's argument that mother-infant sharing, and not male cooperative hunting, was the basis of the development of culture.[91] In other instances

archaeological and written materials are used to supply information on areas of culture that have been neglected because they involve women. One example is recent concern with Engels' classic argument in The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State that the rise of civilization led to the increasing domination and subordination of women.[91] Several articles have examined evidence on the cultural contexts of state formation and their implications for gender relations.[92] In fact, anthropologist Rayna Rapp has developed a framework for feminist scholars to use in analyzing archaeological and ethnohistorical data related to this issue.[93] This proposed model focuses on changes in relations between kinship, cosmologies, warfare, and trade in order to understand how each was used to mediate contradictions of gender and class relations.

One final aspect of feminist methodology in anthropology is a concern with the effect of gender on a researcher's experiences in the field. To some extent, this is an outgrowth of a recent trend toward including the ethnographer's personal and human reactions to fieldwork in an analysis.[94] Feminist anthropologists have taken this approach one step further by also including their perceptions of how their gender influenced the research process. Some have pointed out how being a woman anthropologist allows the researcher to enter arenas closed to male observers.[95] Others have noted that female ethnographers are often treated protectively, particularly if they are relatively young, unmarried, or alone when they do their fieldwork.[96] This, in turn, limits their freedom of movement and accessibility to others. Strategies for dealing with this problem include moving in with a local family,[96] working primarily with the women and children of a community,[98] or living in the field with a husband or team of ethnographers.[99] Other themes consistent in the accounts of women ethnographers include experiences with sexual encounters initiated by the men of a culture, and being cast in a disparaging role such as "child," "prostitute," or "feeble-minded."[100] By developing ways to manage

situations that arise in the field because of their gender, and by sharing this information with their female colleagues, these authors have created yet another feature of feminist methodology in their discipline.

In summary, then, feminist methodology in the field of anthropology reflects attempts to avoid the dangers of a pervasive double male bias. This has led feminist anthropologists to try to replicate the earlier findings of male ethnographers and their male informants. In addition, the comparative method, used both cross-culturally and within a society, has allowed anthropologists to develop more sophisticated conceptualizations and comparative frameworks for studying women. Cross-culturally, this comparative trend has stimulated the growth of numerous inter-disciplinary regional ethnographies which focus on women. Within cultures, comparative methods have used a life cycle and group developmental framework to explore changes in women's position and behavior over time. Archaeological methods have been used to examine the earliest forms of gender relations and their cultural contexts. Finally, women anthropologists have discussed their experiences in the field and proposed strategies for their female colleagues in the research setting.

Summary and Conclusion: Toward a Sociology of Feminist Methodology

Even in their diversity, feminist methodological techniques in each of the three disciplines show some consistent approaches to the issue of how to study women. At least three of these similarities are apparent in the foregoing discussion of methodologies used in current feminist scholarship. First, feminist methodology in each field uses the strategy of methodological borrowing. By taking techniques developed in one discipline and applying them to the subject matter of another, feminist scholars look for new insights and attempt to avoid

some of the sexist assumptions of their own field's methods. Examples of this strategy include the use of linguistic methodologies in sociology, anthropologists' use of archaeological and ethnohistorical techniques, and historians' turn to demographic analysis.

Second, the practice of feminist methodology often involves the strategy of de-bunking through attempts to replicate in which methods are chosen both to duplicate earlier research and to evaluate its analysis and explanation (or lack of one) for gender inequality. This usually involves approaches similar to those used in the original studies, but refined by the feminist methodological ideas mentioned earlier. So, for example, anthropologists have de-bunked the myth of "Man the Hunter" as primary creator of culture using the same fossil, archaeological and primate evidence as the original authors together with more recent observations of gender differences in contemporary cultures. Likewise, historians have demonstrated that periodicization schemas fail to reflect the experiences of women by comparing data from both male and female populations on the same social indicators (e.g., literacy, legal rights, economic position) in given time periods. Finally, sociologists have challenged the myth that statistical manipulation is inherently value-free and objective by comparing the ability of quantitative and qualitative techniques to address issues of gender in research.

Finally, the practice of feminist methodology in each of the three disciplines involves the development and refinement of new methods of data collection. Specifically designed to obtain new information concerning women, these new strategies and approaches represent scholarly attempts to address previous male biases. Thus, historians have sought to obtain demographic data on women through such "non-traditional" sources as women's medical and church records and the minutes of women's clubs and volunteer societies. In addition, the oral history approach

has been refined to fit the purposes of feminist scholarship. Sociologists have turned to methods, such as the essay questionnaire, which allow women respondents to shape the framework of the information they provide. Anthropologists have worked at developing field techniques specially suited for studying female aspects of culture as well as for being used by female ethnographers.

One other feature of the techniques of feminist methodology can not really be called a similarity. This is because it refers to the diversity of methods as an out-growth of a focus on re-conceptualization. In other words, this diversity reflects each field's movement toward new conceptual frameworks, or ways of organizing and understanding data on women. Triangulation in sociology, relational analysis in history, and the life cycle approach in anthropology are all examples of this attempt to move beyond current male-biased schemas. Thus, in feminist methodology the particular methods are not applied as an end in themselves, but as a means to an end. And while this end may vary somewhat, its features are consistent with the four ideas of feminist methodology discussed at the beginning of this analysis.

In all three ways, then, feminist methodology emerges from a feminist critique of research and theory in each academic discipline. The nature of this critique involves the four major ideas presented earlier, namely: 1) there is a lack of information about women's worlds; 2) there is a bias in the lack of women researchers; 3) there is a need to re-conceptualize phenomena to include women's experiences; and 4) the kinds of research questions that are asked have crucial implications both for the results and for practical action. This analysis has demonstrated how feminist methodology in each particular discipline emerges from shortcomings and inadequacies that appear when women's issues are addressed. Thus, feminist methodology in sociology emerges from a debate over the desirability

of qualitative and quantitative research strategies. In history it emerges from dissatisfaction with both oppression and contribution models. In anthropology it emerges as an attempt to circumvent the dangers of a pervasive double male bias.

However, this feminist critique does not consist solely of criticism or debunking. Instead, it extends to include the Kantian notion of critique as reflection on the sources of possible knowledge.[101] Thus, feminist methodology attempts to move beyond present frameworks and ways of understanding to develop new approaches and modes of investigation. As such, it seeks to unveil the distortions of a sexist society while working toward a tranformation of the future.

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